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Identical letters dated 7 April 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to express my grave concern in the face of yet another very serious escalation of Palestinian terrorist attacks targeting innocent Israeli civilians, including children.

Earlier today, Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired a Kornet anti-tank missile that struck and completely destroyed a school bus travelling in the close vicinity of Kibbutz Sa'ad in Southern Israel, critically injuring a 16-year-old boy with shrapnel wounds to the head and causing moderate injuries to the bus driver. The two civilians injured were the only people on the bus at the time; however, just minutes before it was attacked, this bus was full of children who were travelling home from school.

This appalling attack on Israeli children was part of a barrage of some 45 mortars and Qassam rockets that terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired today at communities in southern Israel, which landed in the areas of Sha'ar Hanegev and Eshkol, where the explosion of a mortar caused damage to a home.

Today's very troubling attacks follow a marked increase in terrorist activity directed at Israeli civilians. In the last month we have witnessed the launch of more than 100 mortars and rockets from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel, which represents an unprecedented increase in the projectile fire emanating from the Gaza Strip since the end of Operation Cast Lead in 2009. The terrorists behind these attacks continue to indiscriminately and deliberately target civilians — from schoolchildren in buses to people in their homes to farmers cultivating their fields.

As I highlighted in previous letters to the Council on 23 March 2011, 19 March 2011, 23 February 2011, 9 February 2011, and 2 February 2011, such attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip constitute a clear violation of international law and must be addressed with the utmost seriousness.

Israel holds the Hamas terrorist organization, the de facto authority in the Gaza Strip, fully responsible for all attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip. The relentless projectile fire emanating from the Gaza Strip is just one of many significant security threats facing the Israeli civilian population. In response to the continued attacks against it, Israel has exercised and will continue to exercise its right to self-defence, as appropriate and will take all necessary measures to protect its citizens.

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I would also like to note that the use of a sophisticated anti-tank missile in today's attack to target Israeli children provides another clear example of the dangerous and destabilizing consequences of the continued illegal smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip. In my letters to the Security Council on 19 March 2011 and 18 March 2011, I highlighted an example of one recent attempt by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic to transfer weaponry, including C-704 advanced anti-ship missiles and mortar shells, to terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip when three concealed containers of arms, munitions, and military equipment were captured on board the *Victoria* cargo vessel.

This attempt to transfer weaponry from Iran to terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip through Syria constitutes a blatant violation of numerous Security Council resolutions, and represents only the tip of the iceberg of these two countries illegal efforts to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip.

Israel expects the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the international community to condemn all of these attacks in very clear terms and send a firm message to these terrorists and their patrons, who seek to escalate conflict in our region. In addition, the Security Council and the international community must devote much more attention to preventing the smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, this important issue, an integral part of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), does not receive the appropriate attention that it deserves.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Meron **Reuben**
Ambassador
Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations